

# William Allen White's "As I See It"

Cartoon Sketches by Albert Levering

## The Old Year

FAIRLY good average old year closes to-night. For America it has produced prosperity, which, according to our outward religion, is the end of man. For Continental Europe the old year has brought confusion and a gradual sinking into despair. For England the old year has brought hope, and substantial benefits, and for the rest of mankind—for those who still wear their shirts outside their trousers—the old year is just another year. There is no difference between the years and the centuries and the centuries only for those who believe in progress. It may be a great delusion. Perhaps all this fidgeting that we call change is circular, and we go forward; maybe the twilight's purple glow toward which we are going is only a vicious circle and we are getting nowhere. But those of us who belong to the section of humanity that eats regular meals and sits in chairs feels that it is on the way to glory or other, and by rights this year should leave us one short stage nearer our goal.

In America, which is, after all, our immediate concern if not our ultimate anxiety, we have done two things—we have calmed down and waked up.

The bushes are not so full of Bolshevism as they were last year, nor are businessmen breaking contracts as they did in 1921, or paying so much interest, nor labor looking so keenly for work, nor the old sport drinking so much hooch or such bad liquor as he drank a year ago, and we are much nearer what will pass for normalcy than we have been for a decade. So much for our calm processes.

We are awake to realities as we have been since the war. We know now that we are a part of the world and must play a world part. We realize now that we have been asleep while the grafters and hoodlums and amiable agents of special privilege have been taking the shine off the roof and the stones out of the foundation of the Republic. But the election indicated that the snap of picking eyes out of the public without public protest is about over. When they raided the mint the other day the guards made a mistake about it. In 1921 the guards would have given the bandits three cheers. The bandits did not get their merger sanctioned without a struggle. Last year the merger of the merger would have been a subject for national prayers.



The hang-over spirit of the war  
(Read "Fascisti and Ku-Klux")



And so the old year passes and we go into the new with our nerves serene and our eyes open. Which is a wonderful condition when you stop to think of all we have had to stand for the last ten years.

## The Glad New Year

WHAT a glad New Year it will be for your Uncle Sam! With his creditors burning the backs of his ears with their hot, indignant breath, and with his debtors fading into the horizon, with La Follette on the warpath and Johnson running for President, with the Near East crumbling into barbarism and middle Europe slumping to decay, with the Irish Free State outdoing the tyrannies of England, leaving no one for the Irish to hate; with Great Britain about to lose India and France about to lose her head; with burglars, bandits and hoodlums chasing the minions of the law under the bed and the booze buyers smashing the Federal Constitution to bits, the most comfort Uncle Sam can get out of it is the sweetly solemn thought that, being the oldest government now on earth operating under the same constitution, it will be his turn soon.

So let's wish him a Happy New Year—and then duck and run!

## What Herrin Means

THE evidence in the Herrin massacre indicated that the town of Herrin, which seems to be an average American community, not at all dominated by the foreign-born, went to the strip mine last summer with a cold-blooded decision to slaughter the strike-breakers. The town-folk did wholesale, cowardly murder and probably tortured some of their victims. The union miners seem to have led, but they had the sympathy and support of their fellow citizens. The evidence in court brings out with terrible similitude the contemporary story of the reporters.

It may be well to consider this butchery as something more than an outbreak of angry men. It may be well to ask why the men got angry; why they believed themselves justified in brutal slaughter of their fellow creatures; why the town stood by them. The men who were killed were only exercising their ancient constitutional right to work. Why were they treated worse than beasts? Americans are not given to bestial orgies like that

at Herrin without some cause, however weak it may be. What was the deep significance of the action of these murderers?

We are facing here a changed attitude among workers and their sympathizers to our economic order. The workers and the town they lived in believed that the men who were murdered had violated certain vital rights in asserting their own rights to work. The latent right which the Herrin butchers supported was the right of a man to his job. Probably legally there is no such right. Yet here were a thousand men ready to risk their lives by murdering for that right.

Labor is beginning to feel that skill has the same status as property. The right to apply their skill in the place where it will produce value labor seems to regard as an essential human right. This is astonishing. But we cannot ignore it—this belief of the laborer in his right to what he calls his job. He feels that so long as the place where he works is a "going concern" his right to work is exactly upon the same footing as the owner's right to profit.

This is new doctrine, and, being new, the probability is that it is false doctrine. But it has convinced men so that they will go to war for it. These cowards at Herrin were just like the German cowards in Belgium—kind fathers, indulgent husbands, ordinarily good citizens, mad with war lust, turned into mad-dogs by fanaticism. And in considering fanaticism, after punishing and clearing away the fanatics, the thing to do is to consider its sources, to examine its bases, to see wherein the pressure of society upon the human heart produces an inflammation that results in the madness.

Herrin's brutes should be removed from society; but the thing that made them brutes, the cause that justified a whole American community in mob violence, should be studied, and from the study we may learn a lesson.

## Borah and the Grass Roots

SENATOR BORAH'S demand for an international conference upon economic problems took courage back of his wisdom. A man who seems to break with his tradition has to battle with goat-brained men whose god is consistency. Borah, seeing the need of bolstering a crumbling

world, not for the world's sake, but for our sake, did only what Borah naturally would be expected to do. He never has been an opportunist. He has followed his convictions without fear. And the interesting and curious thing about his change is that it has come from the times. The need of an economic conference, the need of restoring Europe in order to preserve the European market for American farmers, is a conviction that has forced itself inexorably into every intelligent mind.

Borah keeps his ear to the grass roots. But he listens to the grass roots not for guidance in casting the next ballot in the Senate, but for useful information. He has found not that the people want the conference—possibly they do not want it—but that they need it. So Borah is for it. He is that kind of statesman, Borah has that rare mental gift, the gorgeous independence of a man with an open mind.

## The Return of "Fatty"

POLITICALLY, the gesture with which

Will Hays announced the return of "Fatty" Arbuckle to the films was a mistake. The return of "Fatty" has nothing to do with his banishment. Whether his retirement was wise or not, it was achieved, and the return of "Fatty" after a short-time sentence was rather below the high grade of A-1 acumen which Mr. Hays has been producing for the last ten years. If "Fatty" was banished for cause, his banishment was too short. If the cause of his banishment was not real, but imaginary, then he should have come back with an apology from those who banished him. If, on the other hand, the head of the motion picture industry thinks the sentiment which justified the banishment of "Fatty" from the films has subsided, the head of the motion picture industry has made the mistake of his young and innocent life.

"Fatty" had nothing coming to him except an apology or a longer sentence.

## Four Years Ago

FOUR years ago this week Colonel

Roosevelt died. In the four years of his absence the poignant sense of personal loss has abated but little for the thousands who knew him for a friend, and for millions of others the four years have served to put him in even higher esteem than they held him when he was with us in the flesh. During the first year or so it seemed that a curious Roosevelt myth might arise—the shadow of the militant statesman complaining at the supine attitude of what he felt was a craven administration. Because of that passing shadow



That slave-driver, Presidential bee

(Read "Wallowing in Morality")